

## ALASKA RANGE

*Denali National Park and Preserve, summary.* The 2001 climbing season finished on a great note this year, with safe and successful experiences enjoyed by climbers, guides, and pilots, as well as the National Park Service. In fact long-time park employees indicate that the 2001 season was one of the most enjoyable seasons to date. The weather in June was “clear” throughout the month, with climbers summiting the mountain on all but three days. Air taxis were able to fly in and out of the Kahiltna base camp with very few delays. There were new routes and numerous repeat ascents of hard climbs made by experienced teams blessed with stable weather.

It was also a great year for the wilderness, thanks to the labors of park staff, as they led a passionate environmental-awareness campaign. These determined efforts by rangers and volunteers in weighing trash, numbering fuel cans, and educating the public on human waste disposal made a huge difference in returning Denali to its pristine state. Despite a record number of climbers, many seasoned veterans agreed that the mountain was the cleanest it has been in modern history.

A partnership with the American Alpine Club in the development and use of the Clean Mountain Can, and in the purchase of biodegradable waste bags, helped in the effort to explore new methods of human-waste disposal. The AAC grant provided financial support for a pilot study involving rangers and volunteers, as well as guided and non-guided expeditions. Nevertheless, with the growing number of climbers, we are still seeing occasional abandonment of caches and improper disposal of human waste. The mountaineering staff issued nine citations for waste-related violations.

It was a relatively quiet rescue season. Not only were there no fatalities in the park; no climbers or backcountry users suffered critical injuries. On the topic of search and rescue, the South District was given the task by Congress of completing a cost-recovery study that looked at a variety of rescue-related financial issues.

Rangers carried out 11 mountaineering patrols on Denali, and also patrols into the Ruth Glacier and Little Switzerland. Mountaineering volunteers again provided invaluable support to rangers on Denali. Their experience and expertise enabled mountaineering patrols to professionally carry out rescue and environmental-education efforts.

A record 1,305 climbers attempted Mt. McKinley, with a record 772 reaching the summit. Four expeditions attempted climbs during winter months, though only Masatoshi Kuriaki reached a summit, climbing Mt. Foraker on March 31, 2001, via the Southeast Ridge. The average trip length for an expedition on Mt. McKinley was 17.1 days. The average age of a Denali climber was 36 years. The oldest climber was 70, the youngest 11, both record-breakers. Women comprised 10 percent of the climbers on Mt. McKinley, and 45 percent were successful. Guided clients accounted for 18 percent of climbers on Mt. McKinley; clients and guides together accounted for 25 percent of the climbers on the mountain.

A total of 189 summit ascents were made during May, 549 in June, and 34 in July. The busiest days on the summit of Denali were June 4 (69 climbers) and June 8 (68 climbers). There were only three days in June when climbers did not reach the top.

Climbers came from 39 nations. After the United States (with 765 climbers), the other nations most represented were United Kingdom (65), Japan (48), Switzerland (45), Canada (44), Korea (40), France (37), Finland (34), and Germany (31).

On Mt. Foraker 11 climbers summited out of 40 attempting the peak.